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## PROFESSOR SHEDD'S "DOCTRINE OF ENDLESS PUNISHMENT."

In last year's February number, we took occasion to review the well-known article by Prof. Shedd, in the *North American Review*, upon "Endless Punishment." That article revealed to us how incompetent a man is to write upon this most weighty subject, who does not apprehend the great gospel principle, which underlies the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, of *Redemption through Resurrection*, and who therefore is compelled to regard the whole plan of God in Nature and in His moral government as wedded to a pitiless law of retribution, out of whose fatal clutch only a chosen few have as yet been extricated; and these only by a special intervention of the sovereign power and grace of God.

To this original article the Author has now added two others upon "The History of the Doctrine" and "The Biblical Argument," publishing the whole in a volume which is issued as his matured and complete argument in support of the doctrine of endless punishment.

We have had time to read carefully only the Biblical argument, and as it is upon this that this whole controversy really turns, we propose to offer some remarks upon it, premising that the fatal defect above referred to is still more apparent in this chapter. Any reader who

has really grasped the meaning of "the gospel of the grace of God" as a message of "glad tidings of great joy to all people," will at once perceive to what wrong uses Prof. Shedd has put his formidable array of texts.

We notice first, however, some points at which we find ourselves in cordial agreement with him.

1. We have repeatedly stated in these pages that the Old Testament "Sheol" and the New Testament "Hades" and "Gehenna" alike refer to that realm of destruction to which wicked men are consigned at death. There is no *radical* difference in these terms, although Gehenna represents the deepest and most hopeless pit in this realm of death. Dr. Shedd's collation of passages to prove this point is convincing. In order, however, to explain a number of Old Testament passages which speak of good men going down to Sheol, he draws an arbitrary and unsatisfactory distinction between the uses of the word. In the majority of passages he finds that it refers to the dark abode of the wicked where they suffer righteous retribution for their sins. But in numerous cases he makes the word to be a simple equivalent for "the grave," as, for example, where it is said that Korah and his company "went down alive into Sheol, and they perished from the congregation" (Numbers xvi. 33); or where the Psalmist expresses his trust that God will redeem his soul from the power of Sheol (xlix. 15). When one, however, comes to see that Sheol or Hell is the place in which man's embodied being (to which pertains the "soul" as distinct from "spirit") is destroyed,* the necessity for any such

* We are not to suppose, however, that the soul does not outlast the body. As the finer essence of man's embodied being it may long survive and suffer.

forced and arbitrary distinction is avoided. Good men, on account of sin, the common sin of the race as well as their own sin, have to go down to Sheol. Their bodies are dissolved in this pit of destruction, which the law of nature as well as the law of God has dug for all imperfect forms of being, and all the sinful race of men. The difference between the righteous and the wicked is that God delivers their "soul" from death. It is not destroyed in Hell as is the soul of the wicked. This hope had the righteous even in Old Testament times (Prov. xiv. 32. Psalm xlix. 15). While the New Testament saint rose to an exultant faith that, although the earthly house of his tabernacle might be dissolved, his spirit would not be cast out naked and desolate. Having lost his soul (ψυχήν) for Christ's sake he wonld find it. The "soul," as the finer essence of the spirit's embodiment would abide, united to Christ and awaiting the time when it should be clothed in a complete and immortal manhood, "like unto His glorious body."

2. A second point at which we agree with Prof. Shedd is in denying that this place of retributive punishment is one out of which the wicked may emerge into the happiness and glory of the eternal Life. We believe indeed, as he does not fully, that in all punishment under God's government there is an element of corrective discipline. His labored distinction between "punishment" and "chastisement" is too metaphysical to be applied to the scripture treatment of this subject. Was not Adam's expulsion from Eden both penal and corrective? Can any man read such chapters as Lev. xxvi., which describes the future woes that were to come upon Israel, accom-

panied with the promise that when "in the land of their captivity" they should perchance "confess their iniquity" and "accept the punishment" of it as just, he would restore them, and doubt that all Israel's threatened penalties were also corrective? The same principle must apply to God's government everywhere, for He changes not. But while we cannot deny that the punishment of Sheol, the land of the sinner's captivity, may bring him to humble himself under the mighty hand of God, the most that is promised him or provided for him by God's grace is a resurrection out of it. A rehabilitation in life in manhood, out of which he was cast, may bring him within the sphere of God's gospel of eternal Life. But Hell is no place for such future probation.

We agree, therefore, with Prof. Shedd that a definite punishment in Hell is plainly threatened in the Bible; that wicked men do not pass out of this world into a place where the opportunities of this life are continued, and that this doom is indeed a dreadful one from which men need to fly at once to the hope set before them in the gospel. Salvation implies a damnation to be saved from.

The fatal defect, however, in all this class of writers is that they do not see, what is most plain in scripture, that the weight of this fearful penalty falls upon man in death and after death in its immediate consequences, and is not reserved to a far-distant judgment day. The wicked are now and daily being turned into Hell. Korah and his company went down at once into Sheol. Dives died and was buried, and "in Hades he lifted up his eyes being in torment." When Jesus warned men that it was far better

to pluck out a lustful eye, and to lose one such offending member than that the whole body should be cast into Hell, it was the present body, whose eye of lust had sinned, that He referred to, and not a future resurrection body. And the Gehenna he speaks of is not a far-distant lake of fire, but a present yawning pit of dissolution. St. James teaches that the tongue of sinful man is *now* "set on fire of Gehenna" (iii. 6). This fire burns in all the evil passions of men. And it is a consuming fire. Down into its depths must be cast the whole of this old man which is "corrupt according to its deceitful lusts." It is this present body of sin and death for which the fire of Hell is kindled. The Christian is saved out of this fire, because the Christ in him hands over his body of sin to a present burning (2 Cor. iv. 10). He gives up his old natural manhood to death, in order that the new man may be formed in him which cannot sin because it is born of God, and which therefore cannot die. But all other men must go down into this pit in which body and soul are destroyed. And the peril is impending. Yea, the fires of Hell are already kindled in them. We see it burning in the wan faces and pinched frames, and inflamed blood and bloated carcases of vicious men, who, while they walk the streets we walk, are treading on the verge of Hell, and are being scorched and withered by its flames.

If Dr. Shedd could be brought to see that the harvest of death for sin which men must reap is an immediate one, that the judgment of the Son of Man which consigns men to the eternal fire is *now* set, that His sorting between sheep and goats began, as He emphatically assured

His disciples it would, "before that generation passed away," he would see that men need less to dread a remote eternal fire at "the great day of judgment" and more to fear that immediate casting into Hell which was in the mind of Jesus in His frequent use of these words.

It is because he fails to perceive this that he is obliged to invent another arbitrary and wholly unwarranted distinction between "a Hell for man without the body before the resurrection and a Hell for man with the body after the resurrection" (p. 59). We ask him again: Does the loss of the whole body in Hell, which Jesus warns us against, occur before or after the resurrection? If it was from *this* body that we are urged to lop off the right hand, can it be any other than the casting of *this* body into Hell which Jesus has in mind? And if so, what right has any teacher to assume that the sinner's punishment in body is reserved until after his resurrection?

And this leads us to remark upon the one fatal defect in Dr. Shedd's eschatology, and the one dark veil before his eyes in his reading of all this assemblage of scripture proofs. He does not understand the gospel of the resurrection. He does not see the grace for all mankind which God has put into His purpose and provision to raise all men from the dead. He does not see that the Hell-punishment for the sins of this life comes in before resurrection. There all Scripture, and there especially Jesus places it. If there be a second death, and a second casting into a lake of fire, as there is, it must be after a resurrection to a second life, as he himself would confess; and this second and final doom must be the result of the abuse of this new opportunity in life. Dr. Shedd's

scheme requires us to suppose that our God and Father will reinvest the souls of damned men with bodies at the resurrection, only in order to hurl them back again from His throne of judgment into the Hell from which they came, that they may be tormented in body as well as soul to endless ages. And this Being he bids us worship as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ whose name is Love. But from this monstrous distortion of His ways of judgment, this foul aspersion of His glorious Name, we are at once delivered when we come to see that all these Old and New Testament warnings refer to a wrath which now abides upon the sinner, to a condemnation which he is now under, and to a pit of Hell which even the outraged laws of nature dig for wicked men, and into which they drop at death; but that the grace of God abounding in and over the ruin which sin has wrought in the race, has provided for all men a resurrection out of this pit. And so we come to see that an *œon* in the measure of scripture lasts for the earth, only up to the end of this present economy in nature, and for man, only up to his resurrection. The "eternal fire" is the fire that characterizes this present order in Creation. The "eternal punishment" is that cutting off (κολασις) from the happiness and glory of the Son of Man's kingdom which keeps wicked men in the outer darkness until, in their own time and order, they may be raised. Read from this point of view, all Prof. Shedd's texts appear in a new light and are seen to be consistent with another class of passages which form a part of "all scripture" and are equally necessary to a full understanding of it. How upon Prof. Shedd's view that everlasting punishment in

Hell awaits the vast majority of the human race who have hitherto lived, for he admits that only in rare instances can we cherish any hope for the heathen, can we explain the repeated promise of scripture that in Christ all the families of the earth shall be blessed? Are not the dead a part of this whole? And can death defeat God? Or where shall we bring in the assertion that the mercy of the Lord endureth forever, that "all nations whom He has made shall come and worship before Him and glorify His name" (Psalm lxxxvi. 9)? Or how explain that, after the fullest exhibition by Moses in his song (Deut. xxxii.) of the judgments of God, the fire of whose anger should burn to the lowest Hell, the Gentiles should be called upon to "rejoice with His people"? Or what does Jesus mean when He tells us that He came not to condemn the world but to save it, or Paul when He tells us that He gave Himself a ransom for all, and that He is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe, and that God hath "shut up all in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all" (1 Tim. ii. 6, Rom; xi. 32)? And will Dr. Shedd explain how, upon his view, it is possible that Sodom, which is specially chosen as the scriptural example of what it is to "suffer the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7.) can be restored to its former estate (Ezek. xvi. 53), or how Moab and Ammon and Edom, whose inhabitants had all been sent down to Sheol for their sins, can be brought again from their captivity in the latter days (Jer. xlviii. 47, xlix. 6, 39)? These are but fragments gleaned from whole fields of scripture promise, which are meaningless if we are obliged to hold that death has put it forever out of the power of God to

bless these wicked nations. All His promises to unregenerate Israel must fail also. But some of these are directly linked, in the Old Testament, with a promise to ransom them from the power of Sheol (Hosea xiii. 14; Ezek. xxxvii). And Jesus Christ is set forth in the New as sent "to confirm all the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy" (Rom. xv. 8–12). Now this whole class of scripture teaching is entitled to equal consideration with that class which Prof. Shedd has copiously arrayed. And the one does not contradict the other. The promises of mercy are necessary to the right reading of these proofs of His wrath, in order that we may behold both the goodness and the severity of God.

We are therefore to read all these passages about going down to Sheol or being cast into Hell as referring to that destruction which overtakes sinful men in death, and those horrors of dissolution which, as we gather from such teaching as that in Luke xvi., linger beyond the death of the body. We need a revival in our day of "the terrors of death." Our modern apprehensions do not at all take in the solemn import of what it is to die. Nor do we take in the meaning of God's gracious gift to a world bound over to death of a Saviour who is the Resurrection and the Life, into whose hands the Father hath now given all judgment that all men may honor Him. To believe in Him is to be at once transferred from this region of condemnation and death to that of life. To reject Him is to be left to sink down into the sorrows of death and the pangs of Hell. And not until after an unspeakable loss and an utter bankruptcy of that

life in manhood with which God at first endowed us, and a long captivity in the gloom of Hell shall we hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth. And yet this boon of resurrection awaits all mankind. They serve out their death-sentence, and each in their own order, are made alive. Nor is such universal redemption from death universal salvation. The "order" in which the unjust are raised is not the order of eternal life. They are restored to manhood, but they do not "bear the image of the heavenly." They have another opportunity of life, with the possibilities which inhere in it. It will only issue for some in a second death. But it will at least give opportunity for such recompenses and adjustments as the Bible everywhere assumes are yet to be made in God's economy of creation and redemption, and which shall prove that His compassions fail not, that "He will not contend forever, neither be always wroth; lest the spirit should fail before Him and the souls which He has made" (Isa. lvii. 16), and that "His tender mercies are over all His works." There are scriptures also which hint to us that God has great enemies to reckon with in those evil powers in this created system, who have fastened this yoke of bondage to corruption upon His noblest creature, and that their final overthrow will bring deliverance to the captive and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound. There are glimpses of great truths in this direction for the anointed eye. But even the ordinary reader of scripture ought to see that God's promise to ransom men from death is a promise of blessing, and that His purpose to destroy the devil and all His works, and to cast death and Hell into a lake of

fire, and to make all things new, cannot be reconciled with Dr. Shedd's view of an endless Hell in which countless myriads of the human race, immortalized in body and soul, writhe in eternal agonies, in company with the devil and his angels; an everlasting realm of sin and hate and rebellion, enclosed within that kingdom in which all things are put under the feet of man's Redeemer and God is all in all.

It is not necessary for us, therefore, to follow Dr. Shedd's argument in detail, nor to refute his expositions text by text. It is enough to show that the point of view from which he marshals and interprets texts is wrong. Portions of his argument, such as are directed against the modern distinction between Hades and Gehenna and the notion that Hades is an intermediate probationary state, we quite agree with. But when he goes on to teach that the fiercest fires of this Hell are not kindled against the sinner until after his resurrection, and that the torment of his soul before the day of judgment is a mere preliminary to a torment of body and soul through endless ages beyond, he shows that he does not understand the place and meaning of resurrection in God's great plan.

His argument is vitiated throughout by these false assumptions:

1. That sinful man is possessed of immortality, and that his soul cannot be destroyed in Hell.

2. His death in body and subsequent torment of soul in Hell up to the day of judgment count for nothing in his sentence. He is yet to be tried, and for this purpose is reinvested with a body, after which his doom is pro-

nounced, (one would think he was doomed before) and he is thrust back into Hell, body and soul, to be tormented with the devil and his angels forever.

3. The resurrection of the countless generations of men who have died in their sins, including all the heathen (with rare exceptions) who never heard of Christ, has about it no redemptive or beneficent character whatever. It is only retributive.

4. No honest interpretation of our Lord's words about "eternal punishment" is possible which undertakes to limit it by His great promises.

5. By this word "eternal," which even Dr. Shedd shows (pp. 79–88) is of varied meaning, he rules out not only these promises to "all the families of the earth." He perverts their promised resurrection into an awful calamity and their redemption by Christ Jesus into a curse.

Is it not far more reasonable to suppose that our blessed Lord, who knew the meaning of these great promises and bore the weight of them on His loving heart, when He spoke (Matt. xxv.,) about sending men away into "eternal fire" for "eternal punishment" referred to the same thing so often spoken of in His earlier discourses as the being cast into everlasting fire (Matt. xviii. 8), and which we have seen refers to an immediate loss of body and soul in that pit of dissolution into which man falls at death, and that His words do not primarily relate to the awards of a distant resurrection state. Still less do they annul the great promises with which scripture connects the hope of resurrection and which He died and rose again to fulfil. Sure we are that all the scripture passages which set forth the doom of the wicked are more intel-

ligently read if we regard them as applying to an *æon* this side of resurrection, and that in this way only can they be harmonized with the grand promises of grace toward Israel and toward all nations which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

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## CHRISTIAN UNION.

Any one who examines the New Testament doctrine of the church, will perceive at once that the present divisions among Christians are abnormal and sinful. The church can never do the work for which God has ordained her so long as they continue. These disjointed and fragmentary members cannot separately possess nor convey the fullness and power of the Holy Ghost which belongs to the body of Christ.

We have recently attended several meetings of ministers met to pray for the outpouring of the Spirit upon themselves and their churches. We listened to their confessions of the lack of this power and of the sins that produce it. Not one, however, made mention of this primary source of weakness and failure. God's Spirit will not act efficiently through churches that have no concern about this matter which grieves His heart, and defeats the very end for which He was given. "For by one Spirit are we baptized into *one body*." The world will never believe that the Father sent the Son to save it, until Christians are more stirred up to get rid of these dreadful sins of denominational pride and self-seeking and rivalry which now defile and cripple and deform the body, and make it so leaky a vessel of His grace to men.

THE TRUE BASIS OF UNION.

This is not found in intellectual agreement as to doctrine. The passage in 2 John 10, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed," has been much abused to justify schism. The context shows (verse 7) that the doctrine referred to is the fundamental doctrine that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." If a man does not confess this, he is no Christian at all. And of course there is no basis for fellowship. But the rule does not apply to fellowship among Christians and in the church. There we are to bear with one another's infirmities and ignorances, as Paul bore with the Galatians. To drive brethren from us who have embraced error upon points less vital than the one St. John refers to, is to force them to crystallize and harden their error into a sect and so aid them to perpetuate it.

The true bond of union, therefore, is *love*. We are bound to love all who are knit together with us into the body of Christ, even though they be imperfect and weak members. Love is the tonic which will soonest cure their defects. This is the only atmosphere in which either we or they can arrive at a clear knowledge of the truth. "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light and there is none occasion of stumbling in him," (1 John ii 9). A baptism of Christian love that would bind all hearts into one would soon clear the church of error and confusion, enable us to see eye to eye, and bring us into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.

And love is the one supreme test of Christian character. "We know that we have passed from death unto life,

because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death." "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." (1 John iii. 14, iv. 12). If a brother does not agree with us, or is led astray by some wrong doctrine, this may be all the more reason why we should love him. If every Christian would daily pray for all who are ignorant and out of the way, and for the whole body of Christ, this current of sympathy through the whole body would soon prepare it to be filled with all the fullness of God.

It is a common impression among those who look for the Lord's coming, that it is useless to expect any better state of things in the church until He comes to effect it. Even if this were so, it would not relieve any Christian of responsibility to do his part toward it. There is not a single scripture which removes from us the obligation, on this account, to bear with and to love one another, to pray for unity and to seek, as faithful stewards, to put the Lord's house in readiness for His coming. Indeed there are at least hints in scripture that the unprepared state of the church is what delays His coming. The Bride must make herself ready. We believe that when the kingdom of God comes nigh, there will be the "signs" of its near presence in such manifestations of divine power as marked the first advent of its King: and that it especially behooves those Christians who cherish this "blessed hope" to seek to prepare the church to be a fit channel for this power. And this she cannot be, except as there be in her that life of love which binds the whole body into one Of all the early churches, the Thessalonian was the one in which the hope of the Lord's return

was the most ardent. And in no other was there more of this spirit of mutual and all-embracing love. "But as touching brotherly love," writes Paul to them, "ye have no need that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more." (1 Thess. iv. 9, 10. See also iii. 12, 13; 2 Thess. i. 3.

The true revival needed in the church, is the revival of Christian love. The great awakening for which the world's salvation tarries, is an awakening of the church to the sin of division. Until then the world will continue to baffle and to taunt the church with the saying "Physician, heal thyself."

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A Word of Wisdom.—There is a refreshing humility in the following words by F. W. H. Myers, in the *Fortnightly Review.* He does not refer indeed to revelation as the true source of knowledge concerning man's destiny, but he admits at least that the drift of true science is not in the direction of the materialistic view.

For my part I believe that many questions which the religious world believes to be already closed in one sense, and the materialistic world in the other, are really just beginning to come within the purview of science. We are just beginning to understand the first elements of problems which so many preachers have solved with a peroration, so many philosophers with a formula, so many physiologists with a smile or a sneer. It is, as I hold, to experimental psychology, to an analysis whose growing power we can as yet hardly realize, that we must look for a slow but incontrovertible decision as to whether man be but the transitory crown of earth's fauna, between ice-age and ice-age, between fire and sea; or whether it may truly be that his evolution is not a terrestrial evolution alone, not bounded by polar solitudes, nor measured by the sun's march through heaven, but making for a vaster future by inheritance from a remoter past.

# STUDIES IN THE BIBLE.

## ETERNAL FIRE, A FACT OF SCIENCE AS WELL AS OF SCRIPTURE.

We have thus far examined the Scriptural use of the term "eternal fire" and its cognates sufficiently to determine,

1. That the one radical idea, common to them all, is that of destruction.

2. The term comprehends and is the exponent of all the agencies by which the consuming energy of Nature wastes and destroys the bodies and souls of men.

Thoughtful men have long been waiting for some statement of the doctrine of future punishment which should be scientific as well as Scriptural. If we are not yet able to arrive at this, we may at least indicate the direction in which it may be found.

Our primary source of knowledge upon this subject is the Holy Scriptures. But its interpreters have too often forgotten that God has revealed Himself to men in other ways than through His Word. As man was made in His image, no conception of God's government of the world can command permanent assent which violates what He has revealed of Himself in man and in the constitution of human society. And as all things were made by Him, nothing can be true which does not accord with what He has made known of Himself in the system of Creation. The mistake of Theology has been in its too exclusive view of God as the moral governor of the world, and of man as His subject. Whereas man is also

the product of a created system of which God is the Author, and the subject of natural as well as of moral law. His place and destiny in this system of nature needs to be studied before we can appreciate the Bible terms which define his destiny as a subject of God's moral government.

We therefore pause here to inquire whether there is anything in Nature corresponding to the Bible doctrine that sinful men must be cast into eternal fire.

The observations of Science convince us that the primary condition of the elemental substances out of which all created forms have been built up, was one in which their atoms were held apart by great heat. The visible universe is for the most part a wilderness of fire. The nearest star to us in space is the Sun, a vast incandescent globe of fire, in whose photosphere vaporous masses of iron and sodium, and other minerals are glowing with intensest heat. On the Earth these same substances have been cooled down, and have combined according to their chemical affinities. In this process of combination the heat-energy has been rendered latent. There has thus been a progress in the creative process from the state of primeval fire, to one of chemical combination and equilibrium, and cosmical order, by which these elements have become subordinated to the ends and uses of Life. Two antagonistic forces seem to have been contending for the mastery on this arena of the universe, the eternal fire and the eternal Life. The fire resolves all things into their primary elements. It is constantly claiming back the things that have been wrung out of its bosom. All processes of decay are but the slower gnawing of the tooth

of this eternal fire. Life, however, has been from the first capturing and subsidizing these substances to the ends of its manifestation. Under its transforming power they are organized into a variety of creature forms, advancing fr. m one stage of development to another, until finally man has appeared at the summit of the series, the highest embodiment of created life. It has been from the first, however, a law of creation that all defective forms of creature life cannot abide. They are but transient and must give way to higher forms. There has been a constant struggle in Nature toward a perfect and abiding form, but it has not yet been reached. Type after type, race after race, has been suffered to sink back into the womb of the eternal fire out of which they were brought forth. But along all the series the abiding Life has been conserving the fruits of past triumphs and making new conquests.

Still, however, it remains the law of Nature that all defective forms of life must yield to the law of decay and go back to the elemental abyss out of which they sprang. And to this law man is no exception. He exists as yet only in a sinful and imperfect type of manhood. And therefore he is made subject to vanity, and is under bondage to this law of corruption. He must depart into the eternal fire.

The eternal Life, however, has at length been manifested in the person of the perfect Man. It was" with the Father" from the beginning, and has now been "manifested unto us" (1 John i. 1, 2). The man-nature in Christ has reached its ideal as the perfect and indestructible image of God, the depository and

vehicle of His Life, the representative of His authority, the inheritor and administrator of His vast estate. As such, Jesus is now triumphant over death and all the powers of the Universe, crowned Lord over all.

It is then not only in obedience to the requirements of a moral law, but also to the law of nature, that sinful men are consigned to the eternal fire, and that only those who, by faith in Christ are made partakers of His nature, enter into the eternal life. This is no arbitrary sentence of an irate Judge. It is according to the eternal order of Nature.

We have already seen that the term "fire" stands in Scripture as the representative of all the death-dealing forces of Nature. In them all God is seen as "a consuming fire." We have also here to notice that a wide generalization of the passages in Scripture which refer to angelic powers, convinces us that they are either closely identified, if not identical, with what we call the forces of nature.* They are the executive forces of the one Supreme force in Creation. And as it is these forces which draw men down into that abyss of dissolution which, in this economy of Nature, may be viewed as its gulf of eternal fire, it is in their agency that we find the proper explanation of the angels which attend the administration of the Son of Man. They "gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity and cast them into a furnace of fire" (Matt. xiii. 41-42). And they are the angels of His might who shall attend Him at His revelation from Heaven in flaming

* See upon this subject Chaps. I, IV, and VI, of "Mystery of Creation and of Man."

fire (2 Thess. ii. 8). The language of Scripture also accords with Science in assuming that there are two classes of forces in the realm of nature, the one life-giving, the other death-dealing. There are two classes of effects, and if these are not to be referred to two classes of agencies, the one constructive, the other destructive, there must at least be an essential difference in the mode of operation when the forces of Nature transcend the sphere of beneficent action and become the ministers of evil and of death. Without, however, seeking to penetrate this mystery, which is beyond our ken, it is sufficient to know that the common language of both Science and Scripture recognizes these two realms of cosmic forces, in one of which the energy of Nature is directed toward the production of order out of chaos, of light out of darkness, of life out of death. And in the other its energy is bent to produce the counter class of effects, remanding to darkness and chaos, dissolving the elements that had combined to the production of forms of life and beauty, breaking down organisms, and carrying down into the vortex of dissolution the creature forms which Life had built up and beautified out of the substances it had rescued from their grasp. Now, as the angels of light are identified in Scripture with these beneficent operations, so on the other hand it has a name for these destructive and death-dealing forces. It calls them "the devil and his angels," "the ruler," "the kingdom of darkness." It has been a great mistake to regard these evil powers as operating against man in the sphere of moral agency alone They are more truly and deeply his physical enemies. They have the power of disease,

(Luke x. 19; xi. 14–18; xiii. 16; Acts x. 38), and of death (Heb. ii. 14). The devil is a prince over all death-dealing forces in Nature (Job i. 12–19; Psalm lxviii. 49; Ephes. ii. 2, vi. 12). The difference between the scriptural and the scientific conception of these forces is that the former always views them as living spiritual agents. But even here science is gradually approaching the scriptural conception. Herbert Spencer admits that the final postulate of science, the omnipresent, inscrutable, unknowable Force may be living and spiritual. Why may not all minor forces in this created system be also living powers? Indeed we were not long ago assured by an able writer upon the "Fallacy of Materialism," that "the theory that the universe consists entirely of mind stuff," and that "mental and physical phenomena, although apparently diverse, are really identical, is the one toward which all the greatest minds that have studied this question in the right way are tending."

There is one sublime luminous truth, however, revealed in Scripture, which is beyond the province of Science. And that is that the Author and Energizer of this created system is directing all its forces, not only to the preparation of it as an abode for the highest forms of life, but toward its ultimate transformation and deliverance from the yoke of these evil powers that have wrought in it this work of corruption and death (Rom. viii. 19–23; Rev. v. 13, xxi. 1–5). The "eternal fire," which is the concrete expression of all these devouring agencies of Nature, must finally consume them all in its own bosom. For we read that it is "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 41; Rev. xx. 10, 14). The death-

dealing forces contain within themselves the principle of self-destruction. The whole realm of death and hell, with "the devil and his angels," must be "cast into the lake of fire." And the Scripture term for this fate is "destruction" (1 Cor. xv. 24-26; Heb. ii. 14). "There shall be no more death" (Rev. xxi. 4).

But although Science halts here, where Scripture advances with firm tread and lifts the veil, there is yet complete accord in what both teach as to the pit of dissolution which Nature, or rather the God of Nature, has dug for all the imperfect forms of created life which have heretofore appeared, and which contain within themselves the principle of decay and death. And the natural man, as belonging to the same system, must depart, under the common curse, into the eternal fire. The sentence of the Son of Man (Matt. xxv. 41), "Depart, ye cursed," is as truly a sentence of the law of Nature as it is of the law of God. Only one Man has as yet appeared in whom the Eternal Life was so manifested as to enable Him to rise above and out of this pit of death into the glory of a divine and immortal manhood. Union with Him, by faith, is the only power of life that can save our lives from destruction and redeem us out of the hands of all our enemies. It is true only of those in whom this purifying and conserving life-power dwells, that they "go into life eternal."

It is manifest, therefore, that before we can arrive at any true doctrine of future or present punishment for sin, we must learn to view man in his relations to this natural system in which God has placed him, of which he is a product, and with whose destiny his own is in-

volved. The fire of hell is not merely a future torment of the mind. The Scripture terms are too literal for this. Nor, on the other hand, is it a gulf of flame specially created for the endless torment in body and soul of lost men. It is a present fact of nature, a fact the proofs of which are all around us, and the signs of whose activity are everywhere in nature apparent; yea, even in our own bodies and souls, depraving, blighting and consuming. We walk each day along the edge of this bottomless pit. Each night we go to sleep upon the confines of this outer darkness. The fire that burns in our very life-blood is a shred of this eternal fire. The vices that taint and inflame it, that blight the bodies of men and consume their energies of soul are but the outer lappings of the billows that toss on this lake of fire and beat themselves upon these shores of life whereon we tread for a few brief years. And the yawning gulf of this sea of raging forces and of elemental unrest waits to receive us all. The cry of even Jesus, in presence of it, was, "Save me, oh God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me . . . Let me not sink . . . neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me . . . Draw nigh unto my soul and redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies" (Ps. lxix). With such "strong crying and tears" did even this Divine Man "offer up prayers and supplications unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared" (Heb. v. 7).

We must, therefore, open our minds to take in this full and Scriptural significance of death, the appointed wages

of sin, if we would understand the Scripture terms which set forth its punishment. The meaning of death, in God's economy of nature and of moral government, has been strangely perverted by a satanic perpetuation in the minds of men of the original lie, "Ye shall not surely die." Men have believed themselves of an immortal nature, apart from God. And hence the real significance of the death-sentence has been missed, and also the real value of the gospel record that God hath given us eternal life in His Son. We need, therefore, to know that all these Scripture terms, "Gehenna," the "hell of fire," "eternal fire," the "fire that cannot be quenched," all pertain to this realm of death and dissolution, and describe to us the pit, which not only the law of God, but the law of Nature, has dug for the sin-blighted bodies and souls of men. It is not to a realm of endless torment, but to an abyss of inexorable dissolution, protracted indeed beyond the death of the body, for the soul, as a finer essence of man's being, is longer in its dying (see page 59), to which wicked men are consigned. And even the righteous, as to their flesh and blood nature, which is but carnal, and must see corruption, do not escape this pit. It is only as they are made partakers of the divine nature, and become in life and spirit identified with it, that they "go into life eternal." This is the profoundest teaching of the scene in Matt. xxv. 31-41. Their life in manhood has become incorporate with the life of the Divine Man. And so they go with Him into His kingdom of joy and into the life eternal. But here again, this doom of the wicked, and of this we cannot be reminded too often, is immediate and lies this side of resurrection. The eternal

fire is a present fact. It pertains to this present economy of nature. This, indeed, is the real significance of the adjective which describes it. It is the *aionion*, the age-during fire. It pertains specially to *this* order of nature and not to the ages to come. Its power then will be gone, for there shall be no more curse nor death (Rev. xxii. 3). It is therefore a present Son of Man, now exalted to Headship over all the forces of the Universe (Ephes. i. 20-23), seated on the throne of an ever-present judgment, and executing the law of this present system of Nature, whose voice we are to hear in the dread sentence, "Depart ye cursed into eternal fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." This is the consignment not of a future host of resurrected dead, who are not here in view, but of the living generations of unrighteous men to that present abyss of dissolution which yawns beneath us all as a gulf of consuming fire. It is from this now-impending peril that His gospel is sent out with its glad tidings of rescue. Its gift of eternal life is the divine antidote to this death. And so great is the power of life now deposited in the new Source of Life to men, that "power has been given unto Him over all flesh," to give not only *eternal* life to a chosen seed who are to be associated with Him in His life-giving work (John xvii. 2), but also to raise up out of the abyss of death to lower orders of life (each in his own time and order), the masses of mankind who have gone down into this pit (John v. 28, 29). Their resurrection, although it be to judgment and corrective discipline, is yet the result of His redeeming work and a manifestation of His triumphant power. And it violates the whole order of God's working in this plan of creation,

and the whole spirit and meaning of His Word in its dealings with these great problems of life and death, to view this recovery of the unjust dead as anything but a blessing, even though it bring with it new risks with the new opportunities of life.

Moreover this view of God's gracious purpose to recover men from the abyss of eternal fire into which they are cast by the law of Nature, as well as by the sentence of the Son of Man, is necessary to show how His goodness answers to His severity. The eternal fire is not master in this universe, only a servant. The devil wins no triumphs that are not turned into defeats by Him who was manifested to destroy him and his works. Not even death can hold his trophies. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." And death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. xx. 14). There is, indeed, before sinful men a fearful punishment. It is no light thing to die and to sink down, body and soul, into that abyss where burns the eternal dissolving fire. It is no small privation to be shut out from the light and life and blessedness of those of whom Jesus says, "They shall never taste of death." "I give unto them eternal life" (John viii. 52, x. 28). And wicked men, when raised, must still be adjudged unworthy of this life. And yet their recovery will prove the truth of what the book of Creation and the Book of God both teach, that the Eternal Life is master of the realm of Eternal Fire, that Love is stronger than wrath. To take away every element of hope from the resurrection of all but the small class who now receive Christ, is to limit His grace and power as the Prince of Life, and to deny that His gospel is glad tidings of great joy to all people.

# NOTES ON CURRENT OPINIONS AND EVENTS.

Dr. Shedd's Book.—The gist of the issue we have raised with the doctrine taught in Prof. Shedd's book on "Endless Punishment" may be thus stated:

On page 104, we find these words: "The asserted extension of redemption between death and the resurrection cannot be placed upon the ground of right and justice; and the only other ground possible, that of the divine promise so to extend it, is wanting."

Now with the whole of this statement we agree. There is no warrant in scripture for the hope now widely entertained, that the period between death and resurrection extends the opportunities of this life, or that the work of redemption goes on. That is the hell-period; the time of punishment.

But how about the period after the resurrection? We ask Dr. Shedd: Are the unjust dead raised because of the redemption of mankind from death by Christ? Is there no "extension of redemption" here? Is their resurrection an untold calamity and a curse? Do the scriptures teach that for *the sins of this life* men will be cast into Hell twice, once before, and again after resurrection? Is he sure that the judgment scene in Matt. xxv. does not precede the resurrection, and that it includes all the dead nations from the dawn of history, resurrected to be damned a second time? If so, where is the proof? And how could the men before the flood, for example, be tried by the test, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me?

Beyond this statement then we assert that the redemption of all mankind from death and Hell, *is* a matter of "divine promise." And that great promises to all the families of the earth are involved in Christ's redeeming work, which can be fulfilled only through and after their resurrection from the dead. And, moreover, we assert that although this is one of the deep secrets of God's word, "sealed up among His treasures," it is just as truly there, and as fully, as was the truth about the death and resurrection of the Christ, albeit the whole generation of religious people in His day were blind to it, and

even His own disciples did not perceive it until after He had opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures.

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DR. BACON'S CASE.—A correspondent sends us from Toronto the following from Scotch Presbyterian sources, as bearing upon the point raised by Dr. Bacon, before the Presbytery, that "subscription" is a matter too sacred for anything but the most scrupulous candor.

From Dr. Guthrie's address when elected Moderator of the Assembly in 1862: "May her ministers ever be men whom no earthly advantage will tempt to sign what they do not believe, and no earthly loss will deter from avowing what they do believe." Words worthy to be inscribed in letters of gold upon every Seminary and Synod Hall.

Dr. Chalmers in one of his publications declares: "Deliver me from the narrowing influence of human lessons, from human systems of theology. Teach me directly out of the fullness and freeness of Thine own Word. Hasten the time when, unfettered by sectarian intolerance, and unarmed by the authority of man, the Bible shall make its rightful impression upon all, the simple and obedient readers thereof calling no man master, but Christ only."

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## ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

A friend writes:

"I cannot help thinking that a really correct view of the state of the dead helps us out of much that otherwise is somewhat difficult, or apparently confused. The Spirit, if I may reverently so say, weighs His words. What makes Him so continually use the word 'sleep' and 'slept,' but because they are the most fitting words to express the truth? *Sleep implies life;* the term is entirely opposed to the gross view of annihilation which is so repugnant to the better instructed and thoughtful student of the word. But sleep likewise as surely implies *unconsciousness,* out of which resurrection *awakes* the man. Ἐγείρω is one of the main words used, and its primary usag is to 'arouse up,' properly from sleep. The normal condition of sleep is unconsciousness; and it is the healthiest condition, out of which man awakes refreshed far more than when he has dreamed. I question whether dreaming is not the exceptional condition of sleep, and engendered by a deteriorated state of body, a state compara-

tively unknown to the ancients before the flood, I should think from their enormous longevity. It implies restlessness of the physical system, not rest, as all experiences tells us. Moreover the organs of consciousness, reflection, imagination, memory, etc., are necessary for a *conscious* state of existence. But life has fled from them in the case of the dead. The spirit, *i. e.*, of life, has returned to God, who gave it, and the *man* returns to dust, for out of the ground or earth, *i. e.*, as a womb, *man* was taken, and to it he returns, as Job states (ch. i. 21) in harmony with Jehovah in Gen. iii.

"With regard to 1 Peter iii. 19–21, to which you allude and which is synchronous, and I might say synonymous with 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'seen of' or rather 'appeared unto angels' as a part of the 'mystery,' it has no bearing upon human beings at all, I think. The reference is to *spirits*, not men, who sinned in Noah's day, *i. e.*, the 'sons of God' cohabiting with the 'daughters of men,' the former term in the Old Testament occurring six times, and invariably referring to celestial beings. To those, giving us an insight into a greater view of God's grace, Christ went after being *quickened in spirit, i. e.*, after resurrection."

We have not space to notice all the important matters our friend suggests. The two main points are:

1. The unconscious state of the dead. He rejects, as do we, that gross view which virtually puts all men out of existence between death and resurrection. At the same time he holds that even the saints sleep away the interval in a dreamless sleep.

We have only to say that the common sense of most English readers will still infer from such scriptures as Luke xvi. (parable of Dives and Lazarus) that the souls of even the wicked do not go into immediate unconsciousness. And therefore, some such explanation as we have at different times suggested is required, viz., that the *soul* as distinct from *spirit* pertains to embodiment, and as of finer essence than the body, does not die with it; although it is destructible (Matt. x. 28), and death is its final doom. And beyond there must be such a survival of the outcast spirit as shall preserve identity, although we need not suppose that, in its ejection out of manhood, it retains a human consciousness and personality. This would satisfy the scripture representation of the man as *dead*, and yet retain such a basis for his future existence as is required by the fact that he will be raised again. And, as regards the righteous, neither the common nor the spiritual sense of most Christians will

ever accept the view that this period is one of blank suspense of life to those who are said to now possess *eternal* life (1 John v. 13), and of whom Jesus says they shall "never die" (John xi. 26) nor "see death" (viii. 51). Even the Old Testament saint had hope in his death that God would deliver his soul from that destruction which awaits the wicked. And if the view we have taken of the "soul" be correct, we may infer that this is the peculiar blessing of the righteous, as distinct from the wicked who lose their souls, that they never lose this more subtle embodiment, and hence are never completely unclothed. And although the Holy Spirit uses the term "sleep" to define this interval, it pushes analogy too far to say that this sleep, in order to be perfect, must be dreamless. Paul, in a trance which partly separated him from bodily conditions, saw things unutterable. And so the "sleep" of the Christian in death, may be for him a period of blessed vision. Stephen "fell asleep," but can we believe that his martyr spirit, which he committed into his Lord's hands, has been left unconscious or naked through these centuries, or that Paul would, with this prospect, have been willing rather to be "absent from the body"? (2 Cor. v. 8; Phil. i. 23).

2. With respect to our brother's peculiar views about the "spirits in prison" to whom Christ preached, we have only to say that such commerce as he supposes is referred to in Gen. vi. 2 is without analogy in nature or in scripture, and that "the long suffering of God in the days of Noah" waited not upon supermundane spirits, but upon disobedient men.

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A correspondent inquires:

1. "Does the resurrection you teach bring back those who die without believing in Christ to the same life of innocence that Adam had before he fell, or do they arise with a nature such as they had when they died?"

ANS.—This question wrongly assumes that the *nature* of Adam was changed by his sin. He was *created* an earthy and a natural man (1 Cor. xv. 45-47). The common impression in respect to his natural purity and nobleness is an exaggerated one, beyond what Scripture warrants. He was innocent and infantile, but liable to sin, and did sin upon the first occasion of temptation. The resurrection of the unjust is to this Adamic life (Rom. v. 18;

1 Cor. xv. 22). But no life that is merely "earthy" and "natural" has in it an intrinsic power of holiness or of immortality. Hence, those so raised must still be under the yoke of subjugation to the creature,—liable to temptation and to sin. And the pressure of this yoke upon them will be proportionate to their previous good or evil character. This seems to be required by such passages as John v. 29; Mark iii. 28, 29, R.V.; Gal. vi. 7, 8, and by the general law given in the true reading of 2 Cor. v. 10, that every one must receive *in the body* according to the things he did. We would say, therefore, that the unjust are raised in innocence, but without the intrinsic power to preserve themselves in innocence, and that the yoke of bondage to earthy conditions will weigh upon them according to previous character.

2. "If sin be viewed as a debt, does the shutting up in Sheol, the prison-house of death, satisfy Divine justice for the sins of this life? In other words, does resurrection bring them out free men?"

ANS.—As "the wages of sin is death" it follows that the death of the sinner in body and soul (Matt. x. 28), with the consequent outcast state of the "spirit," is the ordained penalty of sin and satisfies divine justice. His redemption from death does not introduce him to eternal life. It merely buys back his right to live and re-establishes him in that order of life and manhood from which he was cast out by death. This does not make him a freeman in the Lord. Adam had not the free and eternal life. God did not bestow it at first upon him, nor is he bound to bestow it upon the prisoners whom He sets free. Man is not free from bondage to the creature until he is newly created in Christ Jesus.

3. "If sin be viewed as a crime against the moral government of God, is the imprisonment to be viewed as judicial infliction, or is it chastening, with a view to the improvement of the imprisoned?"

ANS.—It is both. God's penalties are viewed in Scripture as judicially inflicted upon transgressors and also as corrective discipline. For example, in Leviticus xxvi, the Jews are represented as driven away under the curse of God into a land of captivity. And yet (vs. 40-44), if in the land of their enemies "their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity," He declares that He will not cast them away, but will remember His covenant with their fathers and restore them.